

Major African American Authors-English 489
Morehouse College
Course Syllabus

Professor Name: Dr. Corey C. Stayton
Office: Brawley Hall, Room 103N
Office Hours: M/W/F/11am-2pm
Office Telephone: Remind 101 App
E-Mail: corey.stayton@morehouse.edu

English 489 Course Description

This course will examine the significance of the African American literary tradition. We will examine African American literature both as a literary tradition in its own right and as a lens through which we can better see African American culture as a whole. These cultural texts will allow us to see the ways in which African American writers have contributed to the literature. We will consider several literary genres and how they have created a uniquely African American literary genre. In an effort to critically map the trajectories of African American writers, we will be interrogating not only the cultural, historical, and political contexts of the works, but also the ways in which issues of gender, sexuality, and class specifically inform the works. As a starting point, there are several primary questions that will guide our consideration of the course texts:

Research Paper/Research Project 30%:

- This assignment will not be accepted late. You may write a traditional research essay 15-18 pages based on a theme from class and a novel we have discussed (7-10 sources)
- You may develop one of the following: A website, Screencast, Webpage, using one of the major authors we have discussed or one that is approved. The layout will be approved on a case-by-case basis.

English 489 Learning Outcomes:

- (1) To develop an understanding of an African American literary tradition as a syncretically shaped artistic form.

- (2) To begin to understand and analyze the critical uses of the narrative forms of oral traditions, signifying, folklore, and music in making African American literature a unique literary model.
- (3) To understand the theoretical concepts of race, racism, and radicalization as they inform the creation of African American literature.
- (4) To examine the critical connections between historical eras and events and the formation of literary narrative.
- (5) To begin to understand the unique aspects of African American literary theory.
- (6) To develop an understanding of how do race, class, gender, and sexuality interact in African American literature?
- (7) Develop and sharpen critical communication skills through participation in class discussions and writing skills through essay assignments
- (8) Identify the major authors and/or literary works in the various literary periods and movements (Reconstruction to the New Negro Renaissance Movement; Harlem Renaissance; Realism, Naturalism, and Modernism; Black Arts; and the Contemporary Period). academic integrity

Text Required (open resources):

"The Confessions of Nat Turner" by Nat Turner

"David Walker's Appeal" by David Walker

"Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass" by Frederick Douglass

"Their Eyes Were Watching God" by Zora Neale Hurston

"Invisible Man" by Ralph Ellison

"Beloved" by Toni Morrison

"The Color Purple" by Alice Walker

"Song of Solomon" by Toni Morrison

"Notes of A Native Son" by James Baldwin

"The Souls of Black Folk" by W.E.B. Du Bois

"Native Son" by Richard Wright

"The Bluest Eye" by Toni Morrison

"A Raisin in the Sun" by Lorraine Hansberry

*English Composition: Writing Successfully, Corey Stayton, Dubuque, Iowa.
Kendall/Hunt 2022.*

Absence, Lateness, and Late Work:

Attendance Requirements: You are expected to attend each class meeting. If you have more than **3 unexcused absences, you may receive a grade of W or F in the course.** Failure to meet minimum attendance requirements may result in the loss of your financial aid in accordance with federal financial aid requirements. If you miss class, you are responsible for notes and/or work missed. If you exceed this quota of absences, you are responsible for providing a formal excuse (i.e., a note from the student health center). Coming to class late or leaving class early will be documented as a tardy. Four tardies equal one absence.

Late Work: If you must submit an assignment and/or essay late, you typically have 24 hours after the due date to do so. Ten points will be deducted from the late assignment and/or essay. Students missing assignments or tests due to absence(s) must schedule a "make-up" immediately on returning to class provided there is a valid documented excuse submitted the following class period. However, there are no "make-ups" for class discussions or other beginning-of-class assignments, quizzes, or research paper/project, and the final paper will not be accepted late!

Evaluation

Essays (and rewrites) make up 50% of the course evaluation; Research Paper/project counts for 30%; The remaining is largely made up of Quizzes, Group work, Peer Reviews 20%. *Work must be done during the semester. Students who are unable to complete their work may be eligible for a "W" (withdrawal from the course) or in certain cases an "I" (incomplete), according to the discretion of the professor. Students may not request to make up work after the grades are turned in unless there has been a documented, approved absence at the end of the semester. Please note that uncollected essays and exams are saved by the professor for one semester after the course is over.*

Your course Final Grade will be weighted in the following manner:

Evaluation Criteria:

Essays/Midterm/Final exam	(3-5)	-50%
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Research Paper/Project

-30%

Quizzes, Homework, -20%

Papers: All papers will follow MLA 9 format "Times New Roman" 12 font
Never submit an essay via email unless instructed.

MS Word and pdf documents are the only accepted file type for essays.

Expectation of the student:

It is the responsibility of the student to inquire about his or her progress throughout the course. The grade book is always open. Every student will come to class prepared to work with nothing but the best in conduct exhibited. Students will come to class with all the necessary materials needed to assist them in the magnificent joy of learning. This includes printed articles. Students will respect each other, and the Professor, and will treat others as they wish to be treated. Students who display disruptive behavior may be asked to leave the classroom. **Webcams should be on, and students should be dressed appropriately for the learning environment.** Class participation is a must. We are here to learn, not only from the professor but also from each other. Everyone has been given a voice, and you will use that voice to the best of your capabilities. Come prepared and come ready to learn! We will accept nothing but your best!

Expectation of the Professor: The professor shall provide an atmosphere that allows students to think critically and write effectively. The professor will come to class on time and strive to make learning interesting and thought-provoking. The professor will respect students and treat others as he would want to be treated. The professor will be as fair and objective as possible concerning student circumstances and grades. The professor will do his best to see that students learn.

Conferences: Students are strongly encouraged to meet with the professor throughout the semester. If I can be of service to you, please make an appointment.

EEO and Disability Statement: Morehouse College is an equal-opportunity employer and educational institution. Students with disabilities or those who suspect they have a disability must register with the Office of Disability Services ("ODS") in order to receive accommodations. Students currently registered with the ODS are required to present their Disability Services Accommodation Letter to faculty immediately upon receiving the accommodation. If you have any

questions, contact the Office of Disability Services, 104 Sale Hall Annex, Morehouse College, 830 Westview Dr. S.W., Atlanta, GA 30314. (404) 215 -2636.

Academic Dishonesty: Morehouse College students are expected to conduct themselves with the highest level of ethics and academic honesty at all times and abide by the terms set forth in the Student Handbook and Code of Conduct. **A Note on AI: Any work written by artificial intelligence (AI) is considered plagiarism and will not be tolerated. There are instances when AI can be a helpful tool in the writing process, particularly for proofreading. In most instances avoid its use. The use of AI robs us all of the opportunity to learn from our experiences and from each other, to play with our creative freedoms, to problem-solve, and to contribute our ideas in authentic ways.** Instances of academic dishonesty, including, but not limited to plagiarism and cheating on examinations and assignments, are taken seriously and may result in a failing grade for the assignment or course and may be reported to the Honor and Conduct Review Board for disciplinary action.

Inclement Weather Policy: In the event of inclement weather, the College will announce any closures via the emergency notification system and/or through local news outlets. Absent an official closure, you are not excused from attending class due to weather, and any absences will be considered unexcused.

Additional Responsibilities:

You are expected to be prepared to contribute to class discussion. Completion of the reading and the portfolio assignment signifies preparedness. The emphasis of the course is on critical analysis through the close reading of texts, the critical essay, and the writing process. You are responsible for taking notes on discussions of the writing process and on assigned readings in order to be able to incorporate this knowledge in the assigned essays.

Non-discrimination policy: Morehouse College does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, age, religion, sexual orientation, national origin, or handicap.

Course Outline:

Unit 1: Introduction to African American Literature

- Historical context and overview of the African American literary tradition
- Discussion of cosmology, major themes and stylistic elements

Unit 2: Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs- the Slave Narrative

- Discussion of cosmology, major themes and stylistic elements
- "Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass" and its significance
- Exploration of Douglass' themes of slavery, freedom, and identity

Unit 3: W.E.B. Dubois and Zora Neale Hurston- the Harlem Renaissance

- "The Souls of Black Folk" by W.E.B. Dubois as a critique of race, culture, and identity
- Exploration of Du Bois' concept of double consciousness
- "Their Eyes Were Watching God" and its portrayal of race, gender, and identity
- Discussion of the Harlem Renaissance and its impact on African American literature

Unit 4: Richard Wright and Social Realism

- "Native Son" and its portrayal of racial injustice and violence
- Analysis of Wright's social commentary and its impact on American literature
- Notes of a Native by James Baldwin

Unit 5: James Baldwin and Social Realism.

- "Native Son" and its portrayal of racial injustice and violence
- Analysis of Wright's social commentary and its impact on American literature
- "Notes of a Native Son" by James Baldwin
- "Going to Meet the Man" by James Baldwin

Unit 6: Ralph Ellison and the African American Experience

- "Invisible Man" as a portrayal of racial identity and social invisibility
- Analysis of Ellison's narrative techniques and themes of alienation and self-discovery

Unit 7: Alice Walker and Intersectionality And the Black Aesthetic

- "The Color Purple" as a depiction of gender, race, and sexuality
- Analysis of Walker's portrayal of black women's experiences

Unit 8: "A Raisin in the Sun" by Lorraine Hansberry A critique of the American Dream

And Analysis of Black Life and art

Unit 9: Toni Morrison's Multilayered Narratives

- "The Bluest Eye" and its exploration of identity, history, and flight

- Discussion of Morrison's use of magical realism and intergenerational storytelling

Unit 10: Toni Morrison and the African American Female Experience

"Beloved" and its exploration of slavery's legacy and motherhood

Examination of Morrison's writing style and her contributions to African American literature

Unit 11;"Week 11: Toni Morrison and Beauty Standards

- "The Bluest Eye" and its exploration of racial beauty ideals and self-esteem
- Discussion of Morrison's depiction of trauma and resilience